

URBAN SANITARY DISTRICT OF ABERSYCHAN.

MEDICAL OFFICER'S REPORT,

For the Year 1895.

Abersychan, February 10th, 1896.
Gentlemen.—I beg to lay before you the statistical tables required by the Central Sanitary Authority, and to give a general review of the health of your district for the past 12 months.

Mortality from all Causes.—At all ages, 264; under 1 year, 76; 1 and under 5 years, 49; 5 and under 15 years, 11; 15 and under 25, 8; 25 and under 65 years, 68; 65 years and upwards, 52. Mortality from subjoined causes, under 5 years of age: Scarlet fever, 1; membranous croup, 1; typhoid fever, 2; measles, 3; hooping cough, 4; diarrhoea, and dysentery, 4; phthisis, 1; bronchitis, pneumonia, and pleurisy, 36; injuries, 1; all other disease, 72; total, 125. From 5 years of age and upwards: Typhoid fever, 2; measles, 1; rheumatic fever, 1; phthisis, 13; bronchitis, pneumonia, and pleurisy, 37; heart disease, 27; injuries, 5; all other diseases, 51; total, 139.

Table of Population, Births, and of New Cases of Infectious Disease.—Population at all ages, Census 1891, 15,296—estimated to middle of 1895, 15,683; registered births, 649. New cases of sickness in each locality coming to the knowledge of the medical officer of health, under 5 years of age: Scarlatina, 11; diphtheria, 3; measles, 72; typhoid, 2. 5 years and upwards: Scarlatina, 19; diphtheria, 2; enteric or typhoid fever, 8; measles, 49.

Population.—I estimate the population to be about the same as last year. I have no reliable data to go upon, so must make a guess. In consequence of the stoppage of the Pontnewynydd Works, there was a considerable exodus from your district, which I consider was about the natural increase of population, and if I am wrong it will tell against all the rates which I have compiled (with the exception of the birth rate), and not be too sanguine a view of the situation.

Rates.—

The birth rate was 40.7
" death rate was 16.8
" zymotic rate was 0.8
" phthisis rate was 0.9

Deaths (per 1,000 births) under 1 year—11.71.
You will see from the following table the deaths at the different ages as compared with former years:—

| 1895 | 1894 | 1893 | 1892 | Under 1 year. |
|------|------|------|------|---------------|
| 76 | 85 | 83 | 71 | " 5 years. |
| 49 | 46 | 35 | 71 | " 15 " |
| 11 | 7 | 18 | 18 | " 25 " |
| 8 | 14 | 21 | 7 | " 65 " |
| 68 | 53 | 82 | 83 | " 65 years |
| 52 | 30 | 49 | 46 | and upwards. |

The general death rate is low, though not so low as a general death rate as last year; still the infantile mortality is less, falling to 11.71, as compared with 136 (per 1,000 births registered) last year. The entire deaths under 5 years show a considerable fall from the previous, and is a step in the right direction.

The Rainfall.—The total rainfall for the year was 51.77 inches. The wettest months were January (8.13) and November (10.37); the driest, February (0.20), May (0.63), and June (1.26). The highest day's rainfall was on November 10th, when 2.19 inches were registered. Rain fell on 194 days in the year, and about the average quantity fell, so that we are in no danger of our supplies running short for some time to come.

Typhoid Fever.—There were 10 cases of this disease during the year. 1, in February, on the Tranch. This was an imported case, and there was no spread. One, in June, in Abersychan. This was a young girl, who nursed a typhoid patient, caught the disease, and came home—there was no spread from this. One, in July, in Victoria Village, (the cause, after careful search, remained undiscovered). This case, in due course, recovered, but another subsequent case in the same house died in the following month. There were two more cases in August, one of whom died at Woodlairs, and another in Manor-road (same family); cause faulty drain, which defect was immediately remedied. Two, in September, Manor-road and Pontnewynydd—the latter died after a short illness. One in October (Perry-garn), imported; and the last, in December, at Old Furnace—the latter case was fatal after a long illness. As to the cause, there was very little doubt in the minds of the committee who visited the surroundings that the water supply was defective, and steps have been taken to institute a new service.

Scarlet Fever.—There were 50 cases of this disease with one death—it was practically present the greater part of the year. We had three cases in January, but they had no connection with each other—one was in Gardiniffaith, one in Snatchwood,

and the other on the Tranch. The precautions taken were evidently successful in preventing the spread of the infection in two instances, but not in the third. Of the three houses infected it was only possible in one to have proper isolation. There were two fresh cases on the Tranch in February (one fatal), and followed in March by another in the same place, and then your district was free until May, when a fresh case appeared in Victoria Village. Four in July—districts affected, Garn, Old Furnace, and Abersychan. Three in August in Gardiniffaith. Two early in October, Crumlin-road (imported), and in latter part of the same month the disease appeared in Harper's-road, and in November in the Board School-house, Garn, when I considered it necessary to close the schools for a time which had a good effect, inasmuch as we have had an immunity since, with the exception of three cases notified at Blacenyw, the last, December 5th.

Measles.—There were four deaths from measles, and, as far as I know, 121 cases. The greater proportion of the number occurred in the months of January and February, when it was epidemic, in the three divisions of your district. In March there were three cases in the South Ward; in April four, same ward; in June four cases of the German type; in the Central Ward, one in August; one in October on the Tranch, since which your district had been free from the disease.

Influenza.—This disease has been present during the entire year, but was chiefly marked in the spring and Autumn. There were no deaths registered. It was characterised by the usual symptoms, only less intense than formerly.

Whooping Cough.—This disease was accountable for four deaths—considerably less than the previous year. It was present in the winter in considerable numbers; declined in the spring; almost disappeared in the summer; revived in the autumn, when it increased markedly towards the end of the year, and left a legacy for 1896.

Diphtheria.—We had five cases—no deaths, but there was one death from membranous croup. All the premises in which these cases occurred were visited, and your officers had the advantage of the presence of your chairman in one instance in which he took great interest and quite approved of the action taken.

Phthisis.—The rate is a point higher than last year, but compares favourably with the districts similarly situated and is a decided improvement on former years.

Diarrhoea and Dysentery.—There were four deaths under this head, not a large proportion, and contrasting favourably with other mining districts. The County Council have now a peripatetic lecturer on nursing. The class formed in this district was well attended, but not in proportion to its importance.

I have reason to believe this class will be continued under the support of the ladies of the district, and it is hoped that advantage will be taken of the instruction given for the small sum of one penny per lecture in increasing proportion.

It is impossible to over-estimate the advantage to a community in the dissemination of the knowledge to all mothers of how to rear and feed children upon right principles.

Rheumatic Fever.—We had one death from rheumatic fever. This disease is very prevalent in this district, and doubtless arises from the occupation of the people and from the dampness produced by the heavy rainfall. Our mining population in the fullness of their strength freely expose themselves after coming hot from the mines to disain the necessity of warm clothing, hence they are subject to chills. An attack of rheumatism follows, probably laying the seeds of a future heart disease. I wish I could induce them to become more cautious.

Bronchitis, Pneumonia, and Pleurisy.—These diseases accounted for 73 deaths as against 67 in the previous year, and 89 in 1893. There were 36 deaths in children under 5 years, being a little less than half. This is the first time I have had to record this fact. Last year although we had the lowest (general) death rate for instance the proportion was a little more than half. This is so far gratifying, as affording evidence of increased care in young children.

Heart Disease.—There were 27 deaths from this disease, as against 15 last year, and 21 for the year previous.

I think I have now gone over the salient points arising out of the mortality returns, and while congratulating the Council upon the good work effected would beg to point out that much remains to be done, principally in the direction of the prevention

of disease to have the means of isolation of the first cases of infectious diseases provided, and this can only be done by the erection of an infectious disease hospital. In your whole district there are not more than half-a-dozen houses in which isolation can be properly managed, and it is hopeless to expect that an epidemic can be prevented without proper isolation. I would therefore again respectfully ask you to reconsider the matter. A neighbouring district has experienced the difficulty in a case of smallpox occurring recently, and found that upon attempting to get another authority to take the responsibility that the action was wrong and elicited the dictum that each district was responsible for the treatment of its own infectious sick.

Food Supply.—I believe this to have been good throughout the year, as in no case was I called upon to take action.

Milk.—The various dairies have been visited and the milk supplied may be considered good. There were no prosecutions ordered.

Scavenging.—This has been well looked after. In the South Ward it has been let by contract, and if the experiment proves successful, I presume the principle will be extended to the North Ward, saving your own cart more time to deal with the Central. Considerable improvement has been effected in the appearance of your district by the supply of ashbins provided, and must result in a considerable saving of labour. I am indebted to your inspector for the following account of sanitary work done:—

| | |
|--|-----|
| Foul waterclosets and privies cleansed | 61 |
| Blocked drains opened and cleansed | 66 |
| Untrapped w.c.'s furnished with pans and traps | 25 |
| Pigs removed which were kept within prescribed distance | 21 |
| Offensive accumulations removed | 22 |
| Untrapped slop drains furnished with stone ware gully traps | 20 |
| Water-closets built | 39 |
| Slop and surface water drains provided to undrained premises | 7 |
| Houses provided with water supply from Company's mains | 10 |
| Defective and leaky box drains taken up, and sanitised pipes substituted | 11 |
| Troughing and downpipes provided when houses were damp | 8 |
| Cellar drains which were found directly connected to main sewer furnished with disconnecting traps | 6 |
| Privies converted to w.c.'s and draining to sewer | 5 |
| Inmates of overcrowded dwellings dispersed Sanitary defects arising from absence of proper flushing and ventilating appliances to internal water-closets corrected by providing intercepting traps with air inlets and exhaust shafts, furnishing each w.c. with flushing cisterns | 3 |
| Urnal accommodation provided to serve licensed premises | 4 |
| Urinals in defective condition repaired, lined with cement, properly floored, and water laid on | 3 |
| Filthy dwellings whitewashed and cleaned 2 | |
| Total number of sanitary improvements effected or nuisances abated | 316 |

To enforce the same, 188 statutory notices served, 48 written intimations, and 87 verbal requisitions.

The schools throughout your district have been visited periodically, and improvements effected at Cwmffrwdor, Snatchwood, and Gardiniffaith, serious nuisances having been abated at each place.

The slaughter-houses received systematic inspection, and the bye-laws relating to the same have been strictly enforced.

Water Supply.—The water supply of your district may now be considered ample, and the quality of the water supplied by the Water Company good.

Sewage Disposal.—Same as last year, ending in the river. Upon this question we have had Dr Thompson from the Local Government Board, visiting us. Your officers accompanied him and rendered him every assistance, and doubtless in due course we shall have the result of his inspection.

Recommendations.—I would recommend the completion of the drainage scheme, the adoption of the Infectious Disease Notification Act (to include measles), and the erection of an infectious disease hospital.

Your obedient servant,
J. J. MULLIGAN, M.D.,
Medical Officer of Health.

